

SUPPOSING HIM TO HAVE BEEN IN THE COMPANY

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A SERMON
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“Supposing Him to have been in the company.”
Luke 2:44.

ALL who were present on the occasion are sure to remember our meditation upon, “Supposing Him to be the gardener” [Sermon #1699, Volume 29]. Although it was only supposition, and evidently a mistake, yet it yielded us most profitable thought. Here is another supposition, again a mistake—a mistake which yielded a good deal of sorrow to those who made it, and yet in the hands of God’s Spirit it may bring forth profitable instruction to us as we think it over.

I. We will begin our discourse by saying THAT THIS WAS A MOST NATURAL SUPPOSITION. That the child Jesus should have been in the company returning to Nazareth was a most likely thing. When the Jews came up from their different allotments, once each year to Jerusalem, they formed family groups at their first starting, and then as they got a little on the road these groups combined and made larger bands. And as the roads approached to Jerusalem, the people gathered into great caravans, thus they went up to the House of God in company. It must have been a delightful season, especially if they sang those “Psalms of degrees” which are supposed to have been written for such pilgrims. What with prayer, and praise, and holy conversation, and with the prospect of meeting together in Jerusalem, the throne of the great King, they must have been happy bands of pilgrims. It was natural enough that, when all was over at Jerusalem, the child Jesus should return home. Knowing the time when His parents would return, He would be ready to start with them, and failing to meet with them, He would join the company with which He came, and so go back to Nazareth.

His parents did not expect to find Him wandering alone. They looked for Him in the company. Jesus was a child who loved society. He was not stoical, and thus selfishly self-contained, and He was not sullen, avoiding society. He did not affect singularity. In the highest sense, He was singular, for He was “holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners,” but throughout His life He never aimed at singularity either in dress, food, speech, or behavior. He grew up to be a man among men, mixing with them even at weddings and funerals. No man was more truly human than the man Christ Jesus. It is to be believed that as a child He was like other children in all things but sin. Even as a man, He was like other men in all but evil. Jesus was not one whose company would be shunned because of His ill manners; rather would it be courted because of the sweetness of His disposition. He would not make Himself disagreeable, and then crown that disagreeableness by stealing away from those whom He had vexed. They knew the sweetness of their dear child’s character and the sociableness of His disposition, and therefore they supposed Him to have been in the company. This supposition would even more readily occur to us, knowing what we know about Him, which is more than His parents knew. For we know that of old His delights were with the sons of men. We know that He often came among men in angel form before His incarnation and that when He came into the world He came seeking men. As a man, He never seemed happier than when He was in the midst of His disciples, or surrounded by publicans and sinners, or feeding famishing crowds. He was so great a lover of mankind that He loved to be “in the company.” Living and working in such a city as this, with all its millions, the burden is enough to break one’s heart as we consider the city’s sins, its irreligion, and its neglect of God. It is sweet to hope that He who loved to be “in the company” when He was here, will certainly come and bless these throngs of men. If ever a physician was needed, it is in this vast hospital. If ever a shepherd was needed, it is among these perishing sheep. Jesus has such a love to the sons of men, and such a wish to gather them to Himself, that even

now His redeeming work is done He is still always with us. He has been lifted up, and now He draws all men to Himself, and therefore we expect to find Him in the center of these throngs. Those who go into the dense masses of humanity may expect this same Jesus to be with them in full power to save. Rescue the perishing, and He will be in the company. It was a most natural supposition, because of the sweetness and friendliness of His temper that His parents would find Jesus in the company.

They never suspected that He would be found in any wrong place. No thought ever crossed their minds that He would be found in any haunt of vice, or in any assembly of vanity, though such could have been found in Jerusalem. We *do* expect to meet our Lord and the throng of perishing men and women, seeking and saving them, but we know that we shall not find Him among those who find pleasure in noisy laughter and lawless mirth. We never look for Jesus in the theater or the drinking saloon. It would be profanity to suppose Him there. We never look for Him where a question of morals might be raised, for He is undefiled. We expect to find Him where His people meet for worship. We look for Him where honest men are laboring hard for their daily bread, or where they are suffering His Father's will, but we never dream of His being found where the world, the flesh, and the devil hold supreme control. Let His example be followed by us. Let us never go where our Master would not have gone. There are some places where we cannot suppose Him to have been, in those places let it not be supposable that we can be. Let us go only where we can remain in fellowship with our divine Master, and where we should be happy to be found if He were suddenly to come in His kingdom. Let us judge of where we may go by inquiring, "Would Jesus have gone there?" and if He would not have gone, let our feet refuse to carry us that way.

II. But, secondly, THIS SUPPOSITION BROUGHT THEM GREAT SORROW, from which I gather that we ought, with regard to the Lord Jesus Christ, to leave nothing as a matter of supposition. By supposing Him to have been in the company, they were made to miss Him, and to seek Him, sorrowing for three days. Why did they lose sight of Him at all? Why did they not abide with Him? We may not blame them, for *He* did not, but at any rate, they fell into days and nights of trouble by supposing something about Him. Do not suppose anything about Jesus at all. Do not suppose anything about His character, His doctrine, or His work; go in for certainty on such points. I have heard of a German who evolved a camel out of his own inner consciousness. What kind of a camel it was, I do not know, but many persons evolve a Christ out of their own imaginations. Do not do it, for if you do this, you will make yourselves a Christ nothing like Jesus. It will be a mere image, a false Christ, an idol Christ. No human thought could ever have invented our Savior. We put it to all those who doubt the inspiration of the four evangelists—would they kindly write us a fifth gospel? Could they even suggest another action of Jesus which would fit into the rest and be of the same order? They cannot do it. The whole conception of Jesus is original and divine. It is not possible that the most ingenious fancy can add anything to the life of Christ which would square with that which is recorded. If you chance to read the *Protevangelion*, or *the Gospel of the Infancy*, which are spurious narratives of the childhood of Jesus, you will throw them into the fire and say at once, "These do not fit in with the records of the true evangelists. These stories are ludicrously unlike the child Jesus." In fact, all the books which pretend to be a part of the canon will be detected and rejected at once by the simplest reader who is thoroughly versed in the four evangelists. Do not, therefore, *suppose* anything concerning Jesus, but read the Word of God and see what is revealed about Him. Never clip the King's coin, but accept it as it is minted in all its purity and preciousness. Add not to the perfect word, lest plagues be added to you. What the Holy Spirit has written concerning the man Christ Jesus, the everlasting Son of God, receive humbly, and do not import suppositions into your theology. This has been the cause of the division of the church into sects. The bones of contention have not been revealed truths, but imagined fictions. I may invent one theory, and another man, another, and we shall each fight for his theory. A hypothesis is set up and supported by the letter of Scripture, though not by the spirit of it, and straightway men begin to differ, dispute, and divide. Let us lay aside all suppositions, for these things will only bring us sorrow in the end. Let us believe in the real Jesus as He is revealed in the Scriptures, and as the Holy Spirit graciously enables us to behold Him in the glass of the word.

“Supposing Him to have been in the company.” This supposition caused Jesus’ parents great sorrow. Again, I say, beloved, do not take anything about Jesus at haphazard and perhaps. Let this truth apply to your personal dealing with Him. As for instance, do not suppose Him to be *in your hearts*. Do not suppose that because you were baptized in infancy you are therefore in Christ and Christ in you. That is a dangerous supposition. Do not say, “But I have been baptized as a professed believer, and therefore Jesus is in my heart.” The inward grace is not tied to the outward sign. Water baptism does not convey the Spirit of God. Blessed are they who, having the Spirit, can use the ordinance to their profit, but do not suppose that the grace of God is tied to any outward rite. Do not say, “I have eaten at the communion table, and therefore Jesus is in my heart.” You may eat and drink at His table, and yet never know Him, and He may never know you. Outward ceremonies convey no grace to graceless persons. Do not take it for granted that because you are admitted into a Christian church, and are generally accepted as being a believer, that therefore you must be so. I dread lest any of you should think your church membership to be a certificate of salvation. It was not given to you with that view. We judged favorably of your conduct and profession, but we could not read your heart. Do not even suppose that grace must necessarily be in your souls because you have been professing Christians for a great many years, for the lapse of the will does not turn falsehood into truth. It is difficult to know how long hypocrisy can be kept up, or how far a man may be self-deceived. It is even possible that he may die with his eyes blinded through the exceeding deceitfulness of sin. Do not suppose that Jesus is in your heart because you are an elder, or a deacon, or a pastor. I will not make any supposition in my own case, for woe is unto me if, after having preached to others, I myself should be a castaway! Such things have happened; Judas was one of the twelve. Men have been sweet of voice, and yet bitter of heart, they have been taught in the Word of God as to the letter of it, but they have not known the power of the everlasting Spirit, and so they have perished. Verily, I say unto you, in Christ’s name, unless the Spirit of God actually rests upon each one of us personally, it will be all in vain for us to suppose that He is in our hearts because of professions and ordinances, for the supposition may be a damning falsehood, and may lull us into a fatal slumber. How terrible to be taken out to execution with our eyes bandaged by a supposition!

Again, dear friends, do not ever *suppose* that Christ is *in our assemblies* because we meet in this house. Do not go up to a place of worship and think Jesus is sure to be there. He may not have been there for many a day. Is it not sad that out of the tens of thousands of assemblies held on this day there will be many in which Jesus will not be present, for His gospel will not be preached, or if preached, it will not be set forth in the living power of the Holy Spirit. Christ is not present where He is not honored. All your architecture, all your millinery, all your music, all your learning, all your eloquence are of small account. Jesus may be absent when all these things are present in profusion. And then your public worship will only be the magnificent funeral of religion, but the life of God will be far away. It brings great sorrow in the long run to a church if they take it for granted that Jesus must be among them. Our question every Sunday morning ought to be, “What do you think, will *He* come to the feast?” for if He does not come to the feast, it will be the mockery of a festival, but no bread will be on the table for hungry souls. We must have our Lord in our company or we will break our hearts over His absence. We desire His presence even in the smallest prayer meeting and in our minor gatherings when we meet to consult as to His work. If He awakens us by His Spirit, and reveals to us that He was not in our former meetings, we will seek Him sorrowing, as His father and mother did.

Once more, let us not take it for granted that the Lord Jesus is necessarily with us *in our Christian labors*. Do we not too often go out to do good without special prayer, imagining that Jesus must surely be with us as a matter of course? Perhaps we thus conclude because He has been with us so long, or because we feel ourselves fully equipped for the occasion, or because we do not even think whether He is with us or not. This is perilous. If Jesus is not with us, we toil all the night and we take nothing. But if Jesus is with us, He teaches us how to cast the net and a great multitude of fish is taken. If Jesus is not with us, we are like Samson when his hair was shorn, he went out as at other times thinking to smite the Philistines hip and thigh, as he had done before, but as Watts puts it, he—

*“Shook his vain limbs with vast surprise,
Made feeble fight and lost his eyes.”*

So shall we be defeated if we imagine that we can succeed without fresh divine assistance. The fact being that we ought to seek the Lord in prayer before the smallest Christian engagement, and then we may reap in it the most important result of our lives. You are going to see a poor bedridden old woman. Do not attempt to comfort this king's daughter without first seeking the presence of "the Consolation of Israel." You are going to teach your Sunday school class this afternoon. You have done it so many times that you eat your lunch and walk off to the school scarcely thinking enough about what you are doing to breathe a prayer for your Lord's help. Is this right? Can you afford to waste one single Sabbath afternoon, or one opportunity to speak for Jesus? And yet, it will be wasted if He is not with you. Some of your children may be dead before next Sunday, or never come to the class again! Go not even once, without your Lord. Do not sit down to teach as if you had Jesus at your command, and were sure that of necessity He must succeed your endeavors. He will withdraw from us if we fall into a careless, prayerless habit. Why was He not with His mother that day? Truly He had to be about the business of His heavenly Father, but why did He permit His human mother to miss Him? Was it not because she needed to be taught, as well as the rest of us, the value of His company? Perhaps if we never missed Him, we might not know how sweet He is. I can picture Mary, when she had lost the dear child, weeping floods of tears. Then she began to understand what old Simeon meant when he said, "Yes, a sword shall pierce through your own heart also." The sword was piercing her heart even then, to prepare her for three other days in which she would mourn Him as dead with still bitterer grief. See how she inquired everywhere, "Have you seen Him?" She reminds me of the spouse in the Song, "Have you seen Him whom my soul loves?" I think I see her going through the streets, and saying, at the close of the day, "I sought Him, but I found Him not." Everywhere the same question, "Have you seen Him whom my soul loves?" But she gets no tidings of Him. Peace is all unknown to her till she finds Him. But, oh, how precious He was in her eyes when at last she discovered Him in the temple. How careful she was of Him afterwards. How happy to think that no harm had come to her dear charge! If you and I ever lose the society of Christ in our service, we will go to Him and cry, "My Lord, do not leave me again. What a fool I am if You are not my wisdom! How weak I am if You are not my strength! How worse than silent I am if You are not my mouth to me! How heartless is all my talk, and how flat it falls upon the hearer's ears, if You are not the spirit and the life of all my speaking!" Oh, if all our preaching and teaching were in the power of the presence of our divine Master, how different it would be!

Do then learn the lesson, brethren, as I desire to learn it for myself that we must not take anything for granted about Jesus. We must make sure work concerning eternal things, for if these are allowed to slip, where are we? Grasp the truth and know that it is the truth. Never be satisfied with "ifs," and "buts," and "I hope so," and "I trust so," but make sure of Christ! If you are not sure about the health of your body, yet be sure about your being in Christ, and so healthy in soul. If you are not sure about the solvency of your firm, if you are not sure about the deeds of your estate, if you are not sure about your marriage, yet at least be sure that you have Jesus within your heart. If you have any doubt today, give no sleep to your eyes nor slumber to your eyelids until the Holy Spirit Himself has sealed upon your spirit the certainty that Jesus is yours. Thus I have used the supposition in two ways.

III. Now for a third lesson, THE SUPPOSITION made by these two good people MAY INSTRUCT US. Let us use it at this time, and turn to, "Supposing Him to have been in the company."

I speak now to children who are hearing this sermon. This is for you. Jesus was about twelve years old, and you are of much the same age. Suppose He had been in the company returning to Nazareth. How would He have behaved Himself? Think of Jesus as an example for yourselves. I am sure when the whole company sang a psalm, that bright-eyed boy *would have been among the sweetest singers*. He would have sung most heartily the praises of God His Father. There would have been no inattention or weariness in Him when God was to be praised. You would number the holy child among the most devout worshippers. Therefore, dear children, whenever you come in among God's people, give your whole hearts to the worship, pray with us and sing with us, and endeavor to drink in the truth which is spoken, for so will you be like the holy Jesus. Let all boys and girls pray that among God's people they may behave as Jesus would have done.

I feel persuaded that Jesus would have been found in that company *listening to those who talked of holy things*. Especially would He have been eager to hear explanations of what He had seen in the temple. When the conversation turned upon the Paschal lamb, how that dear child, who was also “the Lamb of God, which takes away the sin of the world,” would have listened to it! I think I see His sweet face turned towards those who spoke of the sprinkled blood. He would surely have said, “What do you mean by this ordinance?” He would have been anxious to share with the grown-up people all the solemn thoughts of the day. So whenever you come up to the house of God, try and learn all that you can from all the teaching of God’s Word. Seek good company, and learn by it. Have a deaf ear to those who speak wickedly, but always be ready to listen to everything about your God, your Savior, your faith, and the heaven where you hope to dwell.

I feel sure, also, that if He had been in the company going home, *He would have been the most obliging, helpful, pleasing child* in all the company. If anybody had needed to have a burden carried, this boy of twelve would have been the first to offer, as far as His strength allowed. If any kindly deed could be done, He would be first in doing it. He grew in favor both with God and men because He laid Himself out to be everybody’s servant. Mary’s Son won the love of all around, for He was so unselfish, kind, gentle, and willing. He did all that He could to make others happy, and blessed are those boys and girls who learn this lesson well. Oh, children, you will be happy yourselves if you live to make others happy! Act thus to your parents, brothers and sisters, friends and schoolfellows, and you will in this be like Jesus.

I am sure, also, that Jesus would not have done in that company as too many boys are apt to do. *He would not have been mischievous, noisy, annoying and disobedient*, but He would have been a comfort and delight to all about Him. No doubt but He would have been the liveliest and most cheerful boy in the whole company, but yet He would not have been rough, coarse, willful, or cruel. There would have been no quarreling where He was. His very presence would have bred peace among all the children that were with Him. I should like you to think over all that Jesus would have done and would not have done. And then I should be glad to see you acting as He did. Take this little word home with you, dear children—ask yourselves often, “*What would Jesus do?*” For what Jesus would have done is the best rule for you.

And now to you elder folks, “supposing Him to have been in the company,” and you had been in the company, I will warrant there is not one father or mother but what *would have been willing to care for Him*. Every matron here says, “I would have taken Him under my wing.” You say that honestly, do you not? You mean it, I am sure. Well, you have an opportunity of proving that you are sincere, for Jesus is still in our company. You can find Him in the form of the poor. If you would have watched over *Him*, relieve their needs, do it to the least of these, and you have done it unto Him. You can find Jesus in the form of the sick, visit them. I wish more of God’s people would addict themselves to calling upon the sick, visiting them in their loneliness and cheering them in their needs. As you say you would have taken care of Jesus, prove it at once by remembering His Words, “I was sick, and you visited Me.” If you would have taken care of Jesus, you can show it by caring for the young, for every young child comes to us under the guardian care of Him who said, “Suffer the little children to come unto Me, and forbid them not.” You that spend your leisure in seeking to bless the young are proving that, if you had been in that company, you would have taken care of the child, Jesus. Above all, consider the orphans, for had He been in that company, He would have been practically an orphan, for He would have lost for a while both father and mother. Many among you have such fond maternal hearts that you would have said, “I must look after that bright, beautiful boy who is now without parents. Evidently He has lost them. Come here child, come here!” You would have felt a joy to have kissed Him, and folded Him to your bosom. Prove it by looking after orphan children wherever they are, and let each represent to you the Jesus of that day as He would have been had His parents’ supposition been correct. Let us see that the love you feel to Jesus when you read your Bibles is not mere emotion or sentiment, but that practical principle lies at the back of it, and this day affects your life and conduct. So far have we gone, and I hope not altogether without profit. May the Spirit of God help us yet further.

IV. But now I change the line of our thought altogether for a little while. Forget the child Jesus now, and let me use the words concerning Jesus in the fullness of His power. **SUPPOSING HIM TO BE IN OUR COMPANY IN ALL HIS GRACIOUS INFLUENCE**, what then? Then, brethren, first, *how happy* will such company be! For with Christ known to be in their company, saints cannot but be glad. You may have seen a picture representing certain of the martyrs sitting together in prison. They are to be burned by-and-by, and they are comforting each other. Now, supposing Him to have been in their company, as I doubt not He was, I could wish to have been there even at the price of sharing their burning—wouldn't you? Or look, a few poor people met together in a cottage talking about Jesus, as people seldom do now. Jesus is there, and their hearts are burning within them! How favored they are! If their hearts might otherwise have been sad, yet supposing Him to be in the company, how restful all the mourners become, how light every burden grows, how every aching heart rejoices, for in His presence there is fullness of joy. Get but Christ into your family circle and it is a ring of delight.

Supposing Jesus to be in the company next *how united* His people will all become! Whenever Christian people fall out, it is because Jesus is not in their company. Whenever there is a lack of love, whenever there is a lack of forbearance, when people fall to fault-finding and quarrelling one with the other, my heart says to me, "Supposing Him to have been in the company, they would not have acted so." They would have looked at *Him*, and straightway have forgiven one another. No, they would hardly have had need to forgive, for they would neither have given nor taken offense, but their hearts would have flowed together in one common stream. The sheep are scattered everywhere upon the hills till the Shepherd comes. But they know His voice, and they gather to His person. Jesus is the center and the source of unity, and when we have Him reigning in His full glory in the midst of the church, divisions and schisms will cease to be.

"Supposing Him to have been in the company," how *holy* they would all grow. Sin dies as Jesus looks upon it, and men's wayward passions yield to His sweet sway. How *devout* would all hearts be, "supposing Him to be in the company!" What prayer there is, and what praise! There is no hurrying over morning devotion, no falling asleep at the bedside at night when Jesus is in our company. Then our heart is praying all day long, and we delight to pray together for His coming and His kingdom.

How *teachable* we are, too, when Jesus is in the company, opening the Scriptures and opening our hearts, and what sweet *communion* we enjoy. How souls go out to His soul, and hearts to His heart, and how we are knit together in the one Christ! How happy, how united, how holy is the company supposing Jesus to be in it.

When Jesus is in the company how *lively* they all are. Why, in these warm mornings some seem half inclined to fall asleep, even in the house of prayer—"The spirit truly is willing, but the flesh is weak." But when Jesus is in the company, the spirit triumphs over the flesh, and we feel full of life, and power, and energy in the divine service. When our hearts burn within us because of His words our bodies cannot freeze. When the soul is quickened by His presence, then the whole man is awakened. As when the sun rises, his light wakes thousands of sleepers, though no voice is heard, so the smiles of Jesus awaken a sleeping church, and stir it to zeal and energy.

If Jesus is in the company, how *earnest* we grow! How zealous for His glory! How intent to win souls! I am afraid it is because Jesus is not in the company that we allow many sinners to go by us without a warning, and we neglect fine opportunities for serving our Lord. You have heard of holy Mr. Payson, the American divine, a man who walked with God in his ministry. He was out one day with a brother minister who had to make a call at a lady's house, and Payson went in with him. The lady pressed them both to stay to tea. She was not a Christian woman, and Payson had other business, and therefore he declined. But as she pressed him very earnestly he sat down, and invoked the divine blessing which he did in terms so sweet and full of holy anointing that he impressed everybody. The lady waited upon him with great attention, and when he rose up to go, he said to her, "Madam, I thank you much for your great kindness to me, but how do you treat my Master?" A work of grace was worked in that lady by the question. She was brought to Jesus, she opened her house for preaching, and a revival followed. Now, if Jesus had not been with Payson, what had become of that woman? I fear that we go in and out among dying men and women, and we let them perish—yes, we let them be damned without an

effort for their salvation, and all because we have not obeyed the voice which speaks to us as it did to Abraham, “I am God Almighty, walk before Me and be you perfect.” We shall never be perfected as the servants of God except we walk in His conscious presence. But if we walk before Him, and He is with us, then shall we be earnest in the winning of souls.

I am sure dear friends, that if Jesus is in the company, then we shall be *confident*, and all doubts will vanish. How firmly shall we believe because we are living in fellowship with “the Truth”! How *safely* we shall be guarded against temptation, even as the sheep are safe from the wolf when the shepherd is near! What blessed, heavenly lives shall we lead! Surely it will be a small change for us to rise from earth to heaven if Jesus is always in the company, in the family, and in the business, in our labors, and recreations, in our joys and sorrows.

V. Lastly, I want to dwell, for just a minute, by way of touching the conscience, upon the reflection that JESUS HAS BEEN IN THE COMPANY, whether we have seen Him or not. I want you to look back upon what He has seen in your company, supposing Him to have been there, when you were disputing the other night. Yes, a point of doctrine had come up, and you differed over it. Did you not wax very warm, my brother, even so as to grow red in the face? Did you not go away from that friend with whom you disputed almost hating him? You know you did. Supposing Jesus to have been in the company, He did not smile on that dispute. He was there, and He was grieved at the way in which you remembered His doctrine but forgot His spirit. Had you perceived His presence, you would have put your argument much more sweetly, and you would have spoken, not for the sake of beating your friend in argument, but for the sake of instructing him and glorifying your Lord. You know that you did not yield a point you ought to have yielded. You knew you were wrong at the time, but your friend pushed you hard, and you said to yourself, “I will not give way though I see that he is right.” Although I suppose that we shall differ about many points till the Lord comes, yet when differences arise, they will present fair opportunities for holy charity and mutual edification, and these will gladly be seized if Jesus is in the company. When next we argue, let each one say, “Jesus is in this company, therefore, while we speak up for what we believe to be true, let us do it in a loving spirit.” Our arguments will not lose force by being steeped in love. Truth is never stronger than when it walks with charity.

Then, again, it may be that some little time ago certain of you were acting in such a way that no common observer could have seen any difference between you and worldlings. You were out in business, dealing with one who was trying to do his best for himself, and you were trying to do your best for yourselves. Do I blame you? Not for being prudent and circumspect, but I hope you will blame yourselves for going far beyond this. You did nothing which I may style dishonest—but did you not sail dreadfully near the wind? You stated something which I must not call a lie, but still it was not true as you meant it to be understood, was it? Businessmen too often aim at getting undue advantage of each other. It is “diamond cuts diamond,” and rather worse at times. If Christian men, in all their dealings, would suppose Jesus to be in the company, how it would change their manners. Think of Jesus on this side of the counter along with you who sell, and on that side of the counter along with you who buy. You both need His presence, for the buyer is generally quite as intent upon cheating as the seller. He wants the goods for less than they are worth, and the seller therefore baits the hook for him. Trade is growing rotten right through, but the blame is not all on one side. When persons must have goods far below the price for which they can be produced, they must not marvel if they find that they are sold an inferior article which looks well enough, but turns out to be worthless. Oh, that you Christian people would always suppose Jesus to be in your company. I can hardly imagine Judas cheating John with Jesus looking on, nor Philip trading hardly with the lad who had the barley loaves. Should not our dealings among the sons of men be such as Jesus can approve? He is our Master and Lord, let us imitate Him, and do nothing that we shall be ashamed for Him to look upon.

Do not accuse me of being personal this morning, for if you do, I will plead guilty. If the cap fits, you wear it. The other day you were in company, and certain persons were talking profanely, or was it skepticism which they vented? And you, as Christ’s disciple, heard them, and what did you do? Did you bear witness for the truth? They made a joke—it was not very clean, but you laughed! Did you not? But, alas, you said nothing for your Lord! Yet He was in the company, seeing all! You had several opportuni-

ties, but you did not put in a word for truth and holiness. Now, supposing Jesus to have been in the company, I think He must have been sorely grieved. Surely your Lord must have thought, “What! All this said against Me, and never a word in reply from him whom I redeemed with My own blood!” Was not this Peter all over again, in his denials of his Lord? You did not deny Him with oaths and cursing, but the same cowardly spirit ruled you. Oh, if you had but come out in your true colors! You do not know what an influence you might have had for good. If we set the Lord Jesus Christ always before us, should we not be brave to testify and quick to defend?

Think, again, of those evenings when a few friends meet together, are they not often a waste of time? “Supposing Him to have been in the company,” as He really is, do you think the evenings should be spent as they frequently are? Dr. Chalmers, a truly devout man, tells us that once at a nobleman’s house, he spent an evening with various friends, and talked over the question of the cause and cure of pauperism—a subject most suitable for conversation. An aged Highland chieftain among the company listened with great attention to the doctor, for Chalmers was master of the subject. Surely they had not spent the evening amiss. But in the night an unusual noise and a heavy groan were heard. The chieftain was dying. In a few minutes he was dead, and Dr. Chalmers stood over him, the picture of distress. “Alas,” he cried, “had I known that my friend was within a few minutes of eternity, I would have preached to him and to you, Christ Jesus and Him crucified.” With how much more reason may many Christians repent of their conversation! How bitterly may they look back upon wasted hours! Supposing Jesus to have been in the company, how often must He have been grieved by our frivolities! Do you not think that it is greatly to our discredit as Christian people that we should so often meet and so seldom pray? The happiest evenings that Christians spend are when they talk even upon secular subjects in a gracious manner, and do not fail to rise to holier themes, and mingle prayer and thanksgiving with their talk. Then when they retire, they feel that they have spent the evening as Jesus would approve.

Did I not hear the other day of some Christian friend who was going to give up working for Christ? And of a dozen Christian friends who were going to break up and no more go on with their holy service for Jesus? One was going to leave the Sunday school in which he had been for years. Another was going to allow a weak church to break up and go to pieces, for he had grown tired of working under discouragements. Another said, “I have had my turn, let somebody else do the work.” Supposing Jesus to have been in the company, do you think that such observations pleased Him? If Jesus were perceived among us, would any of us turn his back in the day of battle? No, brethren, since Jesus is with us, let us serve Him as long as we have any being. Remember John Newton’s speech when they told him that he was too old to preach. The venerable man exclaimed “What? Should the old African blasphemer cease to preach while there is breath in his body? Never!” Do not suffer any difficulty, or infirmity, to prevent your persevering in the service of Jesus in some form or other, and when you feel as if you must leave the ranks, suppose Him to be in the company, and march on! Forward, brethren! Jesus heads the way! Forward, for His presence is victory! God bless you, dear friends, and all this day may Jesus be in the company to make it a hallowed Sabbath to your souls. Amen.

**PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—LUKE 2:40-52, 24:13-35.
HYMNS FROM “OUR OWN HYMN BOOK”—166, 766, 797.**

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